

among men/' No ceremony, no laws of precedence. And then we have the conventional picture of the degeneration of the race, the necessity of choosing a prudent man to rule the rest, the rise of nobility which was merely the recognition of supreme virtue and valour, and was not hereditary—concluding with the startling assertion that none of the nobility of Scotland in the middle of the sixteenth century, tried by the standard of personal merit, deserves a place in the category of honour. Even the son of a prince that is destitute of virtue is no true gentleman, and the longest lineage takes its rise from " a mass of clay and earth." From all which it appears that, despite oppression and servitude, democratic theory and aspiration as well as religious reaction were very much alive in Scotland in this fermenting, reformation century.

We must perhaps lighten somewhat the sombre hues of this picture. The misery begotten of invasion and defeat doubtless lent itself to an atrabilious view of things. The fact that Scotland rallied from the stunning blow dealt at Pinkie to drive the invader across the Border, would argue that there was more valour and virtue left in the land than " The Corn-play nt " would lead us to infer. The scribe certainly errs on the side of pessimism. But even so, contemporary records bear witness that there was only too much truth in the national degeneration that he depicts, and it is difficult to believe that these Scottish nobles and lairds will develop into self-denying reformers and patriots in the coming revolution. Some of them, indeed, were to play a fairly conscientious part in that movement. Too many were to play the opportunist in Scotland as elsewhere.

Though the Commonalty in " The Complaynt " counts the Spirituality among his oppressors, we should hardly conclude from the generalities of our author that the masses were ready to revolt against the Church. He indeed tells the clergy that heresy laws and burnings are not remedies against heretics as long as they do not reform their own lives, and warns them of the consequences. But we must go to the satires of his contemporary, Sir David Lyndsay, if we would realise the unspeakable degeneration of the Church that made revolution inevitable. Lyndsay's mordant diatribes in the vernacular were already working like a leaven of revolt among the people,